



Dr. Robert Main Burton

August 4, 1948 - June 23, 2018

Dr. Robert Main Burton of Corvallis died Saturday, June 23. He was 69 years old.

He was born August 4, 1948, in Bethesda, MD, to Robert and Maurine (Parshall) Burton. Much of his childhood was spent in Webster Groves, MO.

As a teenager, he ran away to Greenwich Village, NY, where he slept on a stage at the restaurant where he worked. He eventually returned home to attend Washington University in St. Louis where he majored in mathematics, wrote poetry, and led protests against the Vietnam War.

He moved west to the Bay Area in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, where he lived in a Berkeley commune and attended over 100 Grateful Dead shows.

He earned his Ph.D. in mathematics from Stanford University in 1977. In 1979, he became an assistant professor of mathematics at Oregon State University in Corvallis, where he raised his family of three children with Sharon Cameron.

During his long career at OSU, he served as chair of the Mathematics Department, taught in the Honors College, and served as Assistant Provost in Academic Affairs. He met his wife, Vicki Tolar Burton, while serving on the

University Curriculum Council.

He was internationally known for his work in stochastic probability, chaos theory, and neural networks. To him, there was little division between mathematics, art, music, and the patterns of the universe. Bob loved math, but not nearly as much as he loved his wife and family.

He is survived by his wife Vicki Tolar Burton of Corvallis; daughter Sarah Main Burton of Corvallis; daughter Maya Burton Severson and son-in-law Kevin Severson of Tigard; son Taber Monro Burton and daughter-in-law Alyssa Burton of Seeley Lake, MT; brother Lt. Col. James Burton (ret.) and sister-in-law April Burton of Elk Grove, CA; stepdaughter Sarah Lench and spouse Eric Lench of Corvallis; stepson Jeffrey Collins and spouse Laurie Collins of Philadelphia; and five grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents Robert and Maurine Burton; and siblings William, Fredrick, and Katherine.

A memorial service will be held at 1pm Tuesday, July 10, at First Presbyterian Church of Corvallis, followed by a reception in Dennis Hall.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his memory to the Association of Women in Mathematics.

Bob was a survivor, and he inspired us all by his strength and courage. He is resting easy now with God, perhaps listening to his favorite Dead song and working on a math problem. May the solution he finds be elegant and infinite.

Please leave condolences and memories at www.mchenryfuneralhome.com

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL **10**. 1:00 PM (PT)

First Presbyterian Church
114 SW 8th St.
Corvallis, OR 97330

Tribute Wall

GK

“ *Ellen and I missed the notice of Bob's passing. I was battling pancreatic cancer at Yale. We send our condolences to you and your family.*

With love and friendship

Ellen and Gerry

Gerald Kuroghlian - August 08, 2018 at 08:49 PM

AF

“ *I am saddened by Bob's passing and will miss him both as a colleague and friend. His enthusiasm for research and for discussing new ideas have been an inspiration for many years. Bob's open mindedness, wide ranging interests, and original thoughts made our conversations on any topic special and enjoyable.*

Please accept my sincere condolences.

Adel Faridani - July 10, 2018 at 01:54 PM

RC

“ *Dear Vicki,*
We were deeply saddened to read of Bob's passing, and we join you in mourning his loss. Perhaps you can find some comfort in these lines (I remember the verse but have forgotten the author):

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.

Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art.

I warmed both hands before the fire of Life.

It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

With great affection,

Dick and Rosalie Clinton

Richard Clinton - July 05, 2018 at 03:35 PM

NS

“ I loved talking to Bob in the math department. He would show up anywhere and brighten the conversation. His ideas or advice would stick with me for days. What a great man. I will miss him.

Nicholas Stevenson - July 03, 2018 at 07:09 PM

MG

“ I am sad to hear this news. He was the kindest Ph.D. advisor that someone could ask for. He made a big difference in my life, and I will be forever grateful for his mentorship. My deepest sympathies to his family. Marc Goulet.



Marc Goulet - July 01, 2018 at 02:15 PM

TA

“ I didn't know Dr. Burton, but reading his obituary – – his beautiful, thoughtful obituary – – inspired me to write from the voice of admiration. I am two years younger, but from the same generation and wanted to share how much we owe to those who led the movement for peace and change that was so obvious in the words that were shared in his memory. Bless you and thank you for sharing your loved one with so many others.

theresa anderson - June 29, 2018 at 08:54 PM

AB

“ Sorry to hear about Bob's passing—Vicki and her family are in our thoughts and prayers.
August and Beth Anne

August Baunach - June 28, 2018 at 02:00 PM



“ *I remember Bob as an unfailingly kind and gentle and brilliant soul. He will be missed. My heart is with Vicki and the family. --Anita Helle*

Anita Helle - June 27, 2018 at 04:57 PM



“ *Gary Blacklock lit a candle in memory of Dr. Robert Main Burton*



Gary Blacklock - June 26, 2018 at 12:09 PM



Best Doctor I ever had, RIP

Gary Blacklock - June 26, 2018 at 12:10 PM



It was my pleasure to work with Bob for many years. Always kind and patient, he was ever the gentleman. My sincerest condolences.

Cindy Lehto - June 27, 2018 at 11:22 AM



We knew Bob Burton as a neighbor on 36th street in Corvallis, and his wife Sharon at that time along with Tabor, Maya and Sara. Our condolences to all the family. He was a wonderful man and will be sorely missed. Megha and Jeannie

Megha Shyam - June 28, 2018 at 02:59 AM



Our condolences to Vicki and Bob's family. He was a bright light in the math department, always with just the right comment. We have enjoyed knowing him over the years.

Frank and Carroll Flaherty - July 07, 2018 at 12:50 PM